

Message Text

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R 210903Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1157

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 7700

E.O. 11652: GDS-2

TAGS: PINR, NI

SUBJECT: GOWON AND HIS COLLEAGUES: BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF GOWON AND NIGERIAN
OFFICIALS EXPECTED ACCOMPANY HIM TO US ARE PROVIDED TO
SUPPLEMENT BASIC BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL AVAILABLE IN DEPARTMENT.
END SUMMARY

1. WHILE COMPOSITION OF DELEGATION WHICH WILL ACCOMPANY GOWON
TO UNGA NOT YET KNOWN, FOLLOWING THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF PROBABLY
MEMBERS ARE OFFERED AS INTERPRETIVE SUPPLEMENTS TO BASIC
BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE IN DEPARTMENT. WE WILL
SUPPLY SIMILAR SKETCHES ON ANY OTHER OFFICIALS SUBSEQUENTLY
ANNOUNCED AS MEMBERS OF DELEGATION WHO ARE THOUGHT LIKELY
ACCOMPANY HIM TO WASHINGTON.

2. GENERAL GOWON, AFTER COMING TO POWER AS COMPROMISE CANDIDATE,
HAS DEMONSTRATED GOOD POLITICAL INSTINCTS AND HAS GROWN WITH
HIS JOB TO POINT WHERE HE HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS DOMINANT
VOICE IN POLICY FORMULATION. ALTHOUGH HE HAS TAKEN INDEPENDENT
ACTIONS WHEN HE BELIEVED NECESSARY, HE NORMALLY PREFERS
"CONSENSUS" POLITICS -- REACHING DECISIONS THROUGH CONSULTATION
WITH OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT. HE HAS GENERALLY
LOW-KEY STYLE, BUT IN CONVERSATION OFTEN CHOOSES TO MAINTAIN
INITIATIVE: HE USUALLY PREFERS TO DELIVER EXTENDED MONOLOGUE
RATHER THAN ENGAGE IN GIVE-AND-TAKE, IN WHICH HE FEELS
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DISADVANTAGED BY NIMBLER INTERLOCUTORS. IT IS THUS OFTEN

DIFFICULT TO GET HIM INTO SHORT INTERCHANGES, WHERE HE FEELS LESS COMFORTABLE. GOWON'S VIEW OF US IS MIXED: HE LOOKS UPON US WITHOUT HOSTILITY, BUT ALSO WITH LITTLE FAITH IN OUR ABILITY OR WILLINGNESS TO HELP WITH WHAT HE SEES AS HIS-- AND AFRICA'S -- BASIC PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT AND SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE WAS DEEPLY HURT BY BYRD AMENDMENT, WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED HIS SKEPTICISM ABOUT OUR POTENTIAL SUPPORT. GOWON, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS, ENJOYS OUTWARD TRAPPINGS AND FEELING OF POWER, AND MAY REMAIN HEAD OF STATE EVEN IN EVENTUAL CIVILIAN REGIME.

3. DR. OKOI ARIKPO, COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, IS SOFT-SPOKEN AND HAS MUCH OF ASPECT OF OXFORD PROFESSOR. WHILE POSSESSING SUFFICIENT INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT AND INTELLECT TO DISAGREE WITH POPULAR POLICIES AND OPINIONS, HE LACKS TEMPER TO UPHOLD UNPOPULAR VIEWPOINT IF SUBJECT TO HEAVY CRITICISM. HE ENJOYS PERSONAL CONFIDENCE OF GOWON, BUT IS LESS INFLUENTIAL THAN MOST IMPORTANT COMMISSIONERS, OR EVEN SOME PERMANENT SECRETARIES (INCLUDING HIS OWN). THIS IS LARGELY DUE TO HIS PERSONALITY AND WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW STRONG PERMANENT SECRETARIES RUN HIS MINISTRY -- SOMETIMES TO POINT WHERE IMPORTANT DECISIONS ARE MADE WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE. WITH GOWON'S APPOINTMENT AS HEAD OAU AND FMG'S CONSEQUENT GREATER INTEREST IN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, IMPORTANCE OF MINISTRY MAY INCREASE, BUT ARIKPO'S OWN INFLUENCE PROBABLY WILL NOT RISE COMMENSURATELY.

4. JOE IYALLA, PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, IS INTELLIGENT, HARD WORKING, AND COMPLEX. INTENSELY NATIONALISTIC, HE JUDGES ALL ISSUES IN TERMS OF NIGERIAN INTEREST, AND IS ALMOST MISANTHROPIC IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD ANYONE WHO SEEMS IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW TO ENDANGER THAT INTEREST. THUS HE CAN BEST BE UNDERSTOOD AS "NIGERIA-FIRSTER" WHO, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, HAS BEEN HOSTILE TO ALL NATIONS THAT HAVE HAD SIGNIFICANT DEALINGS WITH HIS COUNTRY. HIS SINGLE MINDED DEVOTION TO NIGERIA'S INTERESTS MAY, HOWEVER, COINCIDE WITH PERSONAL AGGRANDIZEMENT AND "EMPIRE BUILDING" AS MOTIVATION FOR HIS ACTIONS. POISED, IN COMMAND OF HIS SUBJECT MATTER AND TO A GREAT DEGREE HIS MINISTRY, HE IS RESPECTED -- THOUGH NOT ALWAYS LIKED -- BY HIS PEERS AND SUPERIORS. IYALLA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD US WAS HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL

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COLORED BY EXPERIENCE AS AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON DURING NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR, WHEN HE WAS SUBJECTED TO HEAVY PRO-BIAFRAN PRESSURE. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE AS GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH HIM AS ANY OTHER NATION -- BUT COMMUNICATION WHICH AT BEST IS LIMITED BY HIS DISDAIN FOR ALL NON-NIGERIANS.
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5. HAMZAT AHMADU IS CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER WHO HAS BEEN SECONDED FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO STATE HOUSE AS GOWON'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY. HE DRAFTS GOWON'S SPEECHES AND ENJOYS HIS COMPLETE CONFIDENCE. INTENSE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RIVALRY, COMBINED WITH MUTUAL DISLIKE, EXISTS BETWEEN AHMADU AND PERMANENT SECRETARY IYALLA.

6. IGNATIUS OLISEMEKA, NEWLY APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT IN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, IS CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER. "BRITISH OLD SCHOOL" IN HIS OUTLOOK, HE TENDS TO BE FORMAL IN INITIAL CONTACTS, BUT BECOMES FRIENDLIER UPON GREATER ACQUAINTANCE. GENERALLY, BUT NOT OVERWHELMINGLY, PRO-AMERICAN IN HIS VIEWPOINT. WHILE NOT USUALLY FORTHCOMING IN SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATIONS, HE OCCASIONALLY CAN BE WHEN PRESSED.
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